

Turnover in the Texas Legislature, 1923-2011

Posted At : June 20, 2012 8:50 AM | Posted By : Admin

Related Categories: Members of the Legislature

How will the percentage of new legislators going into the 2013 legislative session compare to previous years? We used data compiled from the library's [Texas Legislators: Past and Present](#) database to create a graphic displaying the percentage of new legislators (freshmen) in the House and Senate going back to the 38th Regular Session in 1923.

The graphic begins with the 38th Regular Session since this was the first legislature to reach 150 members in the House. The [Constitution of 1876, Article 3, section 2](#) provided for a 31-member Senate and a 93-member House, which was to be increased incrementally to 150 members as the state population grew.

Turnover appeared to be more common during the 1920s through the 1950s, possibly due to World Wars I and II. Factors that may have led to increases or unusually high turnover in subsequent years include:

- Redistricting, called apportionment, is accomplished by the Legislature at the first session following the federal census. The subsequent regular session may see a spike in new members as a result. See for example the percentage of new freshmen in the 78th R.S. (2003), 73rd R.S. (1993), and the 68th R.S. (1983). For additional history on reapportionment in Texas, please see [Overview of Texas Redistricting](#), by the Texas Legislative Council.
- [Texas Constitution, Art. III, §3](#) provides that a new Senate should be chosen after every apportionment, and the Senators elected after apportionment "draw terms," with some senators drawing two-year terms and other senators drawing four-year terms.
- [Sharpstown stock fraud scandal](#) led to the election of 73 new legislators in the 1972 election. This caused the percentage of new House members during the 63rd R.S. (1973) to jump to 46.7%. The Senate also experienced unusually high turnover that session with the percentage of new freshman increasing to 48.4% in contrast to 12.9% in the previous session.

Hover over individual bars to get the session, year, and percent of the total body in the chamber that were freshmen. We defined freshmen as new legislators sworn in during the first day or week of the regular session. Members who first served during a called session of a legislature are counted as freshmen members of that legislature. Excluded are members who were elected to a legislature but never sworn in due to death, resignation or other factors.

